



Integrated Vegetation Management – Bainbridge Island

The Washington State Department of Transportation maintains State Route 305 on Bainbridge Island. By controlling the growth of plants on the highway roadside, WSDOT prevents highway damage, increases motorist safety, and complies with state and county weed control laws. Proper roadside vegetation management reduces maintenance costs and minimizes herbicide use.

Implementation of a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

WSDOT is developing roadside vegetation management plans for all state highways. SR 305 on Bainbridge Island is one of the first highways to begin using this system.

Vegetation management plans provide guidance to local maintenance office staff for best roadside maintenance practices based on the unique problems and constraints found along each mile of highway. Each plan utilizes a customized combination of mechanical, chemical, and ecological treatments to establish a natural vegetation environment. Community input and involvement is important to WSDOT. The vegetation management plans also serve as a basis for ongoing communication with neighbors and local community interests regarding roadside vegetation maintenance.

What will result from the Bainbridge Island plan?

Noxious Weed Control

There are numerous noxious weed infestations within the SR 305 right-of-way on the island. These infestations will be treated over the next several years with the most effective, safe, and practical methods to achieve long-term control of these species. Treatments will be prioritized, coordinated, and planned in partnership with the Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Board. However, only two of these species (Diffuse and Meadow knapweed) are currently listed for mandatory control in Kitsap County. These infestations are still small and we'll be hand-pulling knapweed in 2004. Future years may include carefully planned and executed spot treatment with herbicides depending on agreements with the county noxious weed board.

Nuisance Weed Control

Where plants such as Himalayan blackberry and Scotch broom are present, they will be mechanically cut back from the edge of pavement on an annual basis to prevent encroachment on traffic operations.

There are other weeds growing along the highway such as Tansy ragwort, Poison hemlock, and Canada thistle, which are classified by state law as high priority noxious weeds, but are currently not required for mandatory control in Kitsap County. For the purposes of the Bainbridge Island plan these species are referred to as nuisance weeds and for the 2004 growing season, seed production will be controlled through mowing and hand pulling where practical. In future years, carefully planned and properly timed selective herbicide treatments may also be used to control these species. All control measures will be coordinated with the county noxious weed control board.

Shoulder Maintenance

The shoulder area immediately adjacent to the edge of pavement will be reshaped in conjunction with the re-paving of SR 305 scheduled for Summer 2006. This will involve the use of heavy equipment to remove the vegetation and sediment that has built up over several years along the pavement edge. In the interim, the department plans to include SR 305 in a study focused on roadside shoulder vegetation management. The study will consider the use of alternative pavement designs that might eliminate the need to maintain a vegetation free strip with herbicides.

No herbicide will be used to maintain the vegetation-free shoulder on Bainbridge Island at least until 2007 except where guardrail is present. No herbicide applications will be made for this purpose in any case within 60-feet of designated Salmon bearing streams.

WSDOT commitments

- WSDOT will document all control treatments for weeds and undesirable trees and brush, including information on monitoring and evaluation of individual sites.
- WSDOT invites ongoing public review and comment on the Bainbridge Island Integrated Vegetation Management Plan.
- WSDOT will host an open house in early May 2004 to discuss and receive comments on the Bainbridge Island Integrated Vegetation Management Plan.
- WSDOT will be working with the Transportation Research Center (TRAC) at the University of Washington to design and implement a long-term study of alternatives to the use of herbicides in the management of roadside vegetation.
- WSDOT will continue annual training of maintenance employees in the application of Integrated Vegetation Management techniques and treatments.
- WSDOT will provide weekly updates on-line at www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/olympic/construction with the time and location of herbicide applications along SR 305 on Bainbridge Island.

More information

For more information on WSDOT's statewide roadside vegetation management programs and to view a complete copy of the Bainbridge Island Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Plan go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/maintenance/ivm.htm.